



# REPRESENTATION OF TRAUMA IN MAHASWETHA DEVI'S MOTHER OF 1084

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## ABSTRACT

This research paper aims to explore the representation of trauma in the novel *Mother of 1084*. With the backdrop of the Naxalite movement the plot of the novel focuses on the psychological and emotional trauma experienced by Sujata Chatterjee. Partially tracing the life of the marginalized group under the brutal oppression of the upper caste and the government officials the novel vaguely depicts the collective and the individual trauma experienced by the tribal groups. Through the concept of trauma, the researcher has attempted to unveil and explores the concealed and represented trauma in the novel.

**KEYWORDS:** Trauma, Psychological, Oppression, Emotional, Marginalized

## INTRODUCTION

In most of her works Mahasweta Devi fearlessly chronicles the struggles of the marginalized groups in the society. Devi's novel *Mother of 1084* highlights the life of Sujata Chatterjee who belongs to an upper caste family. The novel also partially expresses her concern for the tribal people whose lives and rights are exploited by the dominant group. Notoriously the brutality of the armed forces towards the rebellious youth who are involved in the Naxalite movement becomes the main conflict and cause behind the traumatic experiences of the characters in the novel.

### Background of the study

Still in certain parts of India the tribal community are isolated and marginalized by the ruling and dominant group of the society. They are deprived of freedom and subjected to violence by the powerful and upper-class people. Their voices remain unheard and when they rebel for their own rights they are suppressed and subjected to brutal violence. One such rebellious movement started against the cruel practices of powerful landlords by the armed tribals of Naxalbari is known as Naxalite Movement. The protestors were arrested, jailed and tortured by the armed forces. The rebellious youths were killed and their families were devastated by the death of their sons. The death of their son's still exist in their memories often haunts them as a result they experience trauma which becomes the theoretical background for the proposed study.

### Thesis statement

Traumatic experiences of the past haunts the individual in the present as a result the individual gets entangled in their past traumatic memories through the act of remembering.

### Review of literature

*Mother of 1084* can be analyzed in different perspectives. Researchers have focused on the different aspects of the novel like social realism, psychological crisis, redefining motherhood. Such perspectives and approaches vaguely discussed about the traumatic experiences of the characters represented in the novel. Researcher Vandana Vats in her research article titled *Psychological Crisis of Mother in Mahasweta Devi's Mother of 1084*. She traces Sujata's journey through the emotional vacuum created Brati's death (Vandana, 2016). In the research article titled *Illuminating Multiple Oppressions in the play of Mother of 1084* by Sahini and Rama Moorthy brings out the different level of oppression depicted in the novel and also traces the pain and suffering of the oppressed class. Redefining Motherhood in Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* is a research article by Diviya Muraleedharan and Annu Angeline Abraham. In this article the researchers have redefined the concept of motherhood by focusing on Sujata's selfhood. Another research article titled *Social Realism in Mahasweta Devi's Mother of 1084* by Manita Lakhera traces the depiction of social displacement and classification in terms of economy, culture and norms.

### Theoretical framework

Trauma is defined as the process of retrospectively the unacknowledged and repressed past memories within the unconscious which results in the emotional, psychological and physical distress in an individual. Often an individual experiences trauma as a result of traumatic social violence and Literature itself validate this idea. Trauma Theory explores the haunted memories and flashbacks that often affects the psychic of an individual. The concept of trauma framed by Freud, Cathy Caruth, Erikson and Dori Laub is employed by the researcher to uncover the traumatic experiences of the characters in the novel.

### Analysis

According to Cathy Caruth Post traumatic stress disorder is in which the devastating events of the past repeatedly intrude the thoughts of an individual who has lived through them. In the novel Sujata suffers from the post-traumatic stress disorder. She was often haunted by the memories of his death son. Her death son often exists in her dreams and memories. Bruer and Freud says that the act of remembering the repressed experience in the unconscious inflicts the psychological pain. By remembering her death son through her memories Sujata often experiences emotional and psychological trauma.

Caruth argues that trauma's latency and dissociation disrupt the ability to fully understand or represent a traumatic experience (Caruth 1996, 11). Only through the memories of the characters the reader can get access through the traumatic death of the Naxalite protesters. Factuality of the traumatic death cannot be retrieved. The ability to recover the traumatic past is possible but one can't access to it.

Freud in his work *Beyond the pleasure principle* (1920) says that the traumatic neurosis as the consequence of traumatic conflict that ruptures the protective shield which exist in the outer layer of the mind which protect against the harmful external stimuli. Breaking of the protective shield occurs when an individual is not prepared to face the fright that comes in their way. Sujata, Somu's mother and Nandini were the unprepared system and they have no defense against the harmful external stimuli that is the death news of Brati and Somu. The external stimuli break the protective shield and enters into the inner psyche of the unprepared system and results in neurosis.

Dori Laub 'a famous notion is that the death instinct dismantles the ability of the witness to remember, know and assimilate experiences because trauma activates death drive (Laub 2003, 439). Sujata's inability to assimilate the death of her son is evident by her act of remembering and mourning for him. She refuses to carry out an operation to remove her appendix which indicates she prepares herself towards her death and finally the swollen appendix in her bursts which typify the explosion of both social and personal traumatic experiences. Resulted in the collapse of the witness.

Collective trauma by Erikson refers to the psychological reactions to a traumatic event that affect an entire society. *Mother of 1084* conceals the collective traumatic experiences of the tribal people as a result of traumatic social violence. Only through retrospection of Brati's death by Somu's mother and Nandini the readers can get the glimpse of the traumatic experiences of the protestors involved in the Naxalite movement. In an oppressed society an individual who is subordinated experiences the internal conflict as a result of double consciousness. Silence and forgetting were tool employed by them in order to repress their memories about traumatic social violence.

## DISCUSSION

*Mother of 1084* the novel focuses on the psychological and emotional trauma of a mother named Sujata Chatterjee who belongs to an upper caste family. Sujata has lost his son Brati Chatterjee. The death of her beloved son makes her to lose all her hopes. She suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. Sujata is often haunted by the memories of his lost son Brati who has sacrificed his life for social cause. Sujata experiences psychological disorder when she goes through the painful process of discovering the reason behind her son's death. During this process of discovering she has to rebel against her family which had forgotten the death of Brati. As a result, she was marginalized and alienated by her own family

members. Her voice has been suppressed and she becomes disillusioned. Perplexed and bewildered Sujata suffers from emotional trauma because of her victimized and oppressed position in her family. She becomes the victim of patriarchal hegemony.

Devi has focused the tragic plight of Sujata and she also brings out the pathetic conditions of Somu's mother whose suffering is intolerable. She suffers more than Sujata. Somu's mother has been emotionally traumatized by the death of her beloved son and her husband. Being a subaltern woman, she was marginalized by the mainstream community. She has no proper identity in the novel. She was helpless and voiceless. The novel also traces the physical trauma of the protestors who were involved in the Naxalite movement. They were physically abused and brutalized by the police force. Brati, Somu, Partha and Bijit were brutally killed. Nandini another important character and one of the members in the Naxalite movement who was grieving over the loss of Brati as well as the failure of the revolt. She was also a victim of physical trauma. The violence unleashed on her by the police especially Saroj Pal who physically and mentally abused her in name of interrogation. The scenes of torture reveal the traumatic state of Nandini and also the brutality of the state structures against the rebel. Though Devi did not pay much attention towards the traumatic condition of Somu's mother and Nandini. Indeed, their tragic plight is the most heart-rending element in the novel than the plight of Sujata.

### CONCLUSION

Mother of 1084 is concerned with the hard times of Sujata Chatterjee after the death of her son Brati. By unveiling the traumatic experiences of the elite and subaltern characters in the novel provides the reader with illuminating picture of the driving force behind the characters traumatic past and present. Mahasweta Devi employs trauma as a social and personal phenomenon in order to bring out the social violence and the ideological misbehavior of the armed force towards the protestors.

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